



# Unseaming

*Mike Allen*

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**2014 Shirley Jackson Award finalist for best collection**

**2015 Chesley Award finalist for best cover**

Mike Allen has put together a first class collection of horror and dark fantasy. *Unseaming* burns bright as hell among its peers.

--Laird Barron, author of *The Beautiful Thing That Awaits Us All*

Everyone in the world awakens covered in blood-and no one knows where the blood came from. A childhood doll arrives to tear its owner's reality limb from limb. A portal to the spirit realm stretches wide on the Appalachian Trail, and something more than human crawls through on eight legs. Words of comfort change to terrifying sounds as a force from outside time speaks through them. The buttons in the bin will unseam your flesh to bare your nastiest secrets.

Opening with "The Button Bin," a finalist for the Nebula Award for Best Short Story, and culminating with its sequel, "The Quiltmaker," which Bram Stoker Award and Shirley Jackson Award winner Laird Barron has hailed as Mike Allen's masterpiece, this debut collection gathers fourteen horror tales that, in the words of Barron's introduction, "rival anything committed to paper by the likes of contemporary masters such as Clive Barker, Ramsey Campbell, or Caitlín Kiernan. This is raw, visceral, and sometimes bloody stuff. Primal stuff."

## **More praise for *Unseaming*:**

Throughout *Unseaming*, reality is usually in bad shape right from the start-and from there things proceed to go downhill. Such is the general background and trajectory of life in Mike Allen's fictional world. More could be said, of course, but there's one thing that I feel especially urged to say: these stories are *fun*. Not "good" fun, and certainly not "good clean" fun. They are too unnerving for those modifiers, too serious, like laughter in the dark-unnerving, serious laughter that leads you through Mr. Allen's funhouse. The reality in there is also in bad shape, deliberately so, just for the seriously unnerving fun of it. The prose is poetic, except it's nonsense poetry, the poetry of deteriorating realities, intermingling realities, realities without Reality. And all the while that unnerving, serious laughter keeps getting louder and louder. Are we having fun yet?

--Thomas Ligotti, author of *Teatro Grottesco* and *The Spectral Link*

Mike Allen's *Unseaming* confirms his status as a poet who writes in dread and awe rather than ink. His most recurrent themes are those of wrenching loss and transformative retribution, with a liberal helping of the literal fear of God(s); sowing out a hundred different apocalypses, personal and otherwise, these stories reap an unforgettable crop of nightmares, sketching a chimeric universe in which shape-changing is less a rumour or an option than a sad, simple inevitability. Not to be missed.

--Gemma Files, author of *We Will All Go Down Together*

Mike Allen blends a poet's attention to language with a crime reporter's instinct for the darker precincts of human behavior...These stories glow with demonic energy, and what they illuminate are the faces of our secret selves, screaming back at us from the mirror's depths.

--John Langan, author of *The Wide, Carnivorous Sky and Other Monstrous Geographies*

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